



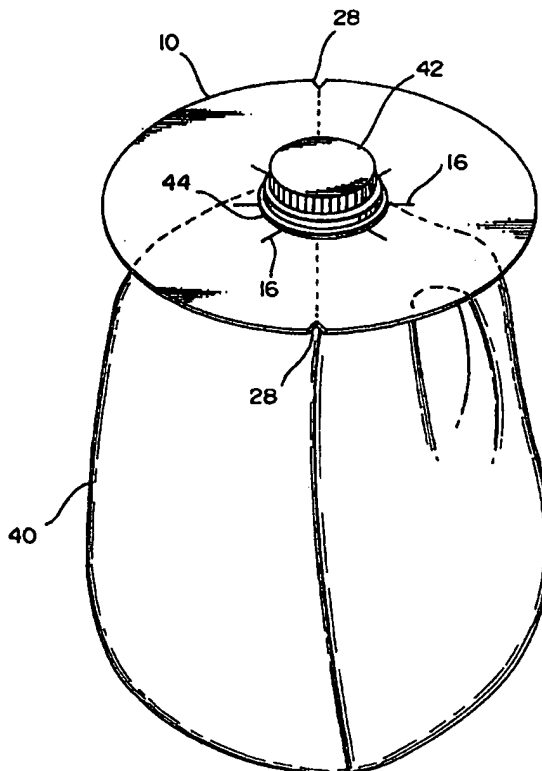
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(21) International Application Number: PCT/US99/29245 (22) International Filing Date: 9 December 1999 (09.12.99) (30) Priority Data: 60/111,602 10 December 1998 (10.12.98) US (71)(72) Applicant and Inventor: KLABUNDE, Michael, P. [US/US]; 255 Arcwood Road, Mahtomedi, MN 55115 (US). (74) Agent: KOTULA, Steven, J.; Dowrey and Associates, 10329 Trombley Road, Snohomish, WA 98290 (US).	(81) Designated States: CA, MX, US, European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE). Published <i>With international search report.</i> <i>With amended claims.</i>	

(54) Title: COUPON VEHICLE FOR NECKED CONTAINERS

(57) Abstract

A coupon vehicle for necked containers comprising a body having a central aperture for receiving the neck of a container and at least one line of perforations extending from the outer edge of the body to the central aperture. The perforations allow the body to be fractured so that the entire coupon vehicle can then easily be removed from the neck of the container. In the preferred embodiment the body is flat and disk-shaped, and has two lines of diametrically opposed perforations that facilitate separating the body into two uniform portions which can be used for separate purposes. The body preferably has a plurality of slits extending radially from the central aperture which form flaps that flex during installation and securely attach the coupon vehicle to the container. In alternate embodiments, at least one line of perforations extends from the outer edge to at least one slit.



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COUPON VEHICLE FOR NECKED CONTAINERS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 1. Field of the Invention.

The present invention relates, generally, to promotional material for retail products. More particularly, the invention relates to coupons applied to necked containers, such as milk bottles.

 2. Background Information.

10 The state of the art includes various coupons and display cards for retail products. The coupons offer consumers a discount on a product featured on the coupon. A coupon can substantially boost sales of a featured product, and lead to subsequent purchases of that product by a consumer, or purchases of related products. Paper coupons are printed in product advertising such as newspapers,
15 magazines, supplements, and mailings. Coupons can be included in a product, such as dry cereal, or they may be included in a product's packaging. Paperboard packaging easily facilitates printing coupons on it, and packaging that uses plastic wrap allows a coupon to be placed under the wrap.

 Packaging for liquids does not as easily provide for coupons, especially for
20 beverages such as milk, juice and carbonated beverages that are packaged in plastic or glass bottles. These packages typically have a paper label adhesively affixed to the plastic or glass container. In the past, coupons have been printed on the label of such containers, but to use such a coupon, a consumer must remove the label from the container. Since the label is intended to stay affixed to the
25 container, this is difficult to do without mutilating the coupon. Coupons have also been adhesively affixed to the label, which can allow easier removal of the coupon, but such a coupon can obscure at least a portion of the label. Labels on liquid containers typically do not have much extra room which can be covered by a coupon.

Several patents disclose coupon or display vehicles having an aperture with radial slits extending therefrom for fitting over the top of a necked container. In patent 5,826,356 to Lapp, the aperture is larger than the neck of the container so that the coupon vehicle rests on the container below the neck and is not necessarily secured to the neck. The slits are for the purpose of facilitating the deformation and collapsing of the hole as the coupon vehicle is passed over the cap for engagement with the neck of a capped beverage container. The coupons themselves are of rectangular configuration and folded among themselves or contained in separate envelopes attached to the vehicle.

U.S. patents 5,390,435 to Grody, 5,348,156 to Maroszek et al., and 5,289,650 to Follett also disclose devices with the similar apertures and radial slits for the same purpose.

U.S. patent 4,197,984 to Hartman et al. discloses an aperture with slits that allow a tab or flap to be punched out of the device when it is inserted over a bottle neck, but the flaps are folded significantly up against the neck of the bottle and may not necessarily hold the device securely on the neck, of the bottle.

The U.S. patent 3,423,861 to Forsythe discloses a card with an aperture for the neck which is smaller than the neck of the container, and which has a single locking flap to exert a ratchet-like grip against the neck below the cap so as to resist upward movement of the card on the container neck.

The Lapp, Hartman, and Forsythe patents also disclose at least one line of perforations which allows portions of the coupon vehicle to be separated from one another but those lines of perforations do not pass through the central aperture. When the usable coupons are separated from the coupon vehicle, a portion of the vehicle remains attached to the container. As these containers are recycled, this remaining portion of the coupon vehicle must be separately removed and disposed of.

None of the patents above disclose a disk-shaped coupon vehicle. U.S. patent 1,353,531 to Heard discloses a disk-shaped marking card for milk bottles. The card has a central aperture with tongues which bear yieldingly on the neck and

can abut against the bead to prevent accidental removal of the card from the neck, but it does not fit snugly against the top of the bottle. The card is not intended to be separated into portions and does not have any lines of perforations.

Applicant's invention provides a coupon vehicle for necked containers
5 which overcomes the limitations and shortcomings of the prior art.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 The present invention provides a coupon vehicle for necked containers which comprises a body having an outer edge, a central aperture having a diameter suitable for receiving the neck of a container onto which the coupon vehicle is installed, and at least one line of perforations extending from the outer edge to the central aperture. The body is preferably flat and disk-shaped, and preferably has a
15 plurality of slits extending radially from the central aperture which form flaps that flex when the coupon vehicle is installed on the neck of a container. The central aperture has a diameter which preferably is slightly smaller than that of the neck of the container, thereby providing for the flaps to remain slightly flexed to securely attach the coupon vehicle to the container when the coupon vehicle is
20 properly positioned on the neck of the container after installation.

The perforations allow the body to be fractured at the perforation line(s) so that the entire coupon vehicle can then easily be removed from the neck of the container. Preferably there are two lines of perforations that facilitate separating the body into two portions which can be used for separate purposes.

25 The features, benefits and objects of this invention will become clear to those skilled in the art by reference to the following description, claims and drawings.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a plan view of the preferred embodiment of a coupon vehicle of the present invention.

5

Figure 2 is perspective view of a milk jug with a coupon vehicle of the present invention installed on its neck.

Figure 3 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the coupon vehicle having a single line of perforations.

10

Figure 4 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the coupon vehicle having two lines of perforations diametrically opposed and aligning with slits.

15

Figure 5 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the coupon vehicle having two lines of perforations connecting with slits and not diametrically opposed, and which allow the coupon vehicle to be separated into two portions of non uniform size.

20

Figure 6 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the coupon vehicle having more than two lines of perforations connecting to slits and which allow the coupon vehicle to be separated into more than two non-uniform sized portions.

25

Figure 7 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the coupon vehicle having more than two lines of perforations uniformly distributed which allow the coupon vehicle to be separated into uniform sized portions.

30

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring to **Figure 1**, an example of the preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated and generally indicated by the reference numeral 10. The coupon vehicle 10 is a body 12 preferably made of synthetic moisture resistant paper or similar material which allows printing on it, and will be suitable for the environment in which it will be used, such as a dairy department at a grocery store. Body 12 is preferably flat, but may have any other suitable shape such as a cone or spherical sector. It is also preferably has a round disk shape, but it may be any suitable shape such as oval, square, rectangular, hexagonal, or octagonal.

Referring to **Figures 1 and 2**, body 12 has a central aperture 14 that is preferably circular and of a diameter suitable for placement of coupon vehicle 10 onto a neck of a container 40, such as a milk jug, juice, carbonated beverage or water bottle, motor oil bottle, or the like. Aperture 14 cooperates with the neck of a container so that the coupon vehicle is preferably securely attached to the container when installed on the container. Body 12 preferably has a plurality of slits 16 preferably extending radially outward from aperture 14. Flaps 18 are bounded by two adjacent slits 16 and a portion of edge 20 of aperture 14. Slits 16 allow flaps 18 to flex as coupon vehicle 10 is installed onto a neck of a beverage container. Preferably, aperture 14 has a diameter slightly less than that of the neck of the container on which it is to be installed, thereby providing for flaps 18 to remain slightly flexed upward when coupon vehicle 10 is properly positioned on the neck of the beverage container after installation.

Alternatively, the diameter of aperture 14 may be equal to or slightly greater than the neck of the container on which it is to be installed allowing the coupon vehicle 10 to fit less tightly on the neck of the container. In that case, the diameter of aperture 14 should be smaller than the diameter of the ridge 44, if

present, or cap 42 of the container so that the coupon vehicle is retained on the neck of the container by the ridge 44 or cap 42.

The number of slits 16 may vary depending on the type of material used for body 12 and the diameter of aperture 14. For installation on one-gallon milk jugs, aperture 14 preferably has a diameter of 1.5 inches, and slits 16 are six in
5 number and have a length of 1/2 inch. If the material of body 12 is sufficiently resilient, no slits 16 may be needed, but for material such as moisture resistant synthetic paper, four to eight slits 16 are preferred.

Referring to **Figures 1 and 3**, body 12 has at least one line of perforations
10 22a, that allow body 12 to be fractured thereat so that the entire coupon vehicle 10 can then easily be removed from the neck of the container. The line of perforations preferably extends from the outer edge 28 of body 12 to edge 20 of aperture 14. If body 12 has only one line of perforations 22a, as in **Figure 3**, the coupon vehicle 10 may still be used for multiple coupons requiring the consumer
15 two cut the coupon vehicle 10 into portions

Preferably there are two lines of perforations 22a and 22b that facilitate separating body 12 into two portions 24a and 24b. This allows each portion 24a and 24b to be used for separate purposes. For example, one portion 24a may be redeemed at the time of purchase of a product onto which coupon vehicle 10 is
20 installed, and the other portion 24b may be retained by the consumer for redemption at a later time. This allows two separate coupons, which may have different sponsors, to be present on one coupon vehicle.

In the preferred embodiment of the **Figure 1**, lines of perforations 22a and 22b are preferably straight and preferably bisect body 12 and aperture 14.

25 Referring to **Figures 4-7**, the line or lines of perforations may alternatively extend from the outer edge 28 to a slit 16. **Figure 4** illustrates an embodiment where the lines of perforations 22a and 22b are diametrically opposed and align with slits 16. Such a configuration allows greater flexibility of flaps 18 adjacent lines of perforations. However, flaps 18 are sufficiently flexible, as in **Figures 1**

and 3, to allow proper installation without a slit at the location of lines of perforations.

Figure 5 illustrates an embodiment where the lines of perforations 22a and 22b do not align with slits 16, and portions 24a and 24b are of unequal size.

5 Figures 6-7 illustrate embodiments having more than two lines of perforations 22a-d so as to allow body 12 to be separated into more than two portions, thereby allowing for more coupons and more sponsors on each coupon vehicle. In that case, the lines of perforations are preferably spaced uniformly around the body so as to allow body 12 to be separated into uniformly sized
10 portions, as in Figure 7, but they need not be, as in Figure 6.

Referring again to Figure 1 Notches 26 are preferably provided at the outer ends of lines of perforations 22a and 22b to facilitate location of the lines of perforations 22a and 22b by consumers, and to facilitate portions 24a and 24b separating at lines of perforations 22a and 22b when body 12 is flexed in a manner
15 intended to separate portions 24a and 24b.

Body 12 preferably has a width W that will cause portions 24a and 24b to have a width that facilitates portions 24a and 24b fitting easily into the bill holders of cash drawers typically used in cash registers, or into consumers' wallets or coupon holders. For a coupon vehicle 10 having lines of perforations 22a and 22b
20 that bisect it, the width W is preferably 4.5 to 6 inches.

Body 12 has promotional information incorporated on one or both sides of it, preferably by printing.

The descriptions above and the accompanying drawings should be interpreted in the illustrative and not the limited sense. While the invention has
25 been disclosed in connection with the preferred embodiment or embodiments thereof, it should be understood that there may be other embodiments which fall within the scope of the invention as defined by the following claims.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A coupon vehicle for use on necks of necked containers, comprising:
 - 5 a body having an outer edge, a central aperture having a diameter suitable for receiving the neck of a container onto which the coupon vehicle is installed, and at least one line of perforations extending from the outer edge to the central aperture.
 - 10 2. The coupon vehicle of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of slits in the body extending radially from the central aperture, the slits cooperating with the central aperture to form flaps that flex when the coupon vehicle is installed on the neck of a container.
 - 15 3. The coupon vehicle of claim 1, wherein the central aperture has a diameter slightly less than that of the neck of the container on which it is installed.
 4. The coupon vehicle of claim 1, wherein the lines of perforations number at least two.
 - 20 5. The coupon vehicle of claim 4, wherein the lines of perforations are uniformly spaced around the body.
 6. The coupon vehicle of claim 4, wherein the lines of perforations
 - 25 bisect the coupon vehicle.
 7. The coupon vehicle of claim 1, further comprising a notch on at least one line of perforations where the line of perforations intersects the outer edge of the body.

30

8. The coupon vehicle of claim 1, wherein the body is flat.
9. The coupon vehicle of claim 1, wherein the body is disk-shaped.
- 5 10. The coupon vehicle of claim 1, wherein the body is made of a synthetic moisture resistant paper.
11. A coupon vehicle for use on necks of necked containers, comprising:
- 10 a body having an outer edge;
a central aperture having a diameter suitable for receiving the neck of a container onto which the coupon vehicle is installed;
a plurality of slits in the body extending radially from the central aperture, the slits cooperating with the central aperture to form flaps that flex when the coupon vehicle is installed on the neck of a container; and
- 15 at least one line of perforations extending from the outer edge to at least one of the slits.
12. A coupon vehicle for use on necks of necked containers, comprising:
- 20 a body having an outer edge;
a central aperture having a diameter suitable for receiving the neck of a container onto which the coupon vehicle is installed;
a plurality of slits in the body extending radially from the central aperture, the slits cooperating with the central aperture to form flaps that flex when the coupon vehicle is installed on the neck of a container; and
- 25 at least two lines of perforations extending from the outer edge to the central aperture.

13. A coupon vehicle for use on necks of necked containers, comprising:

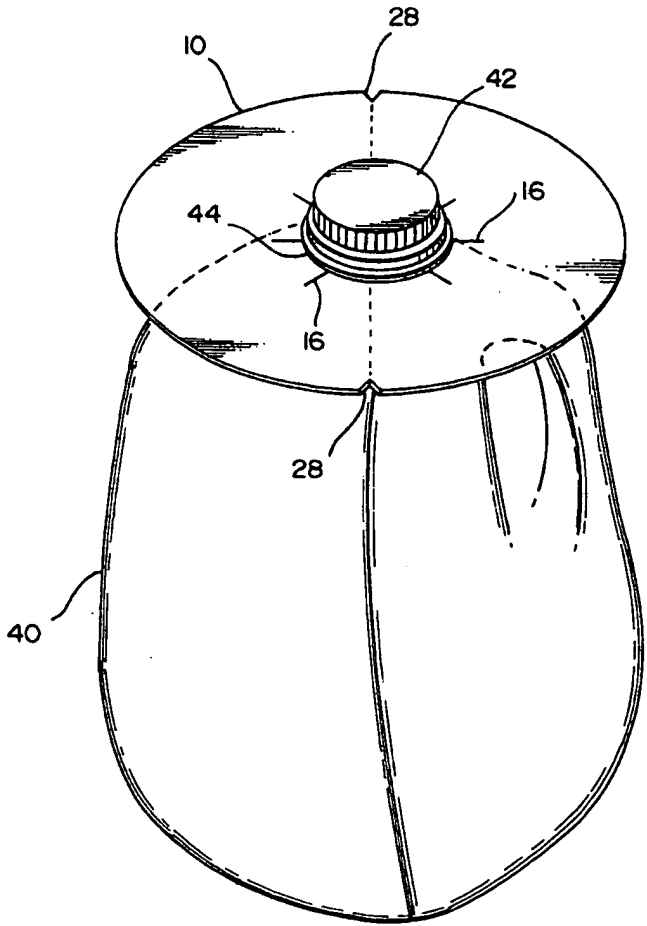
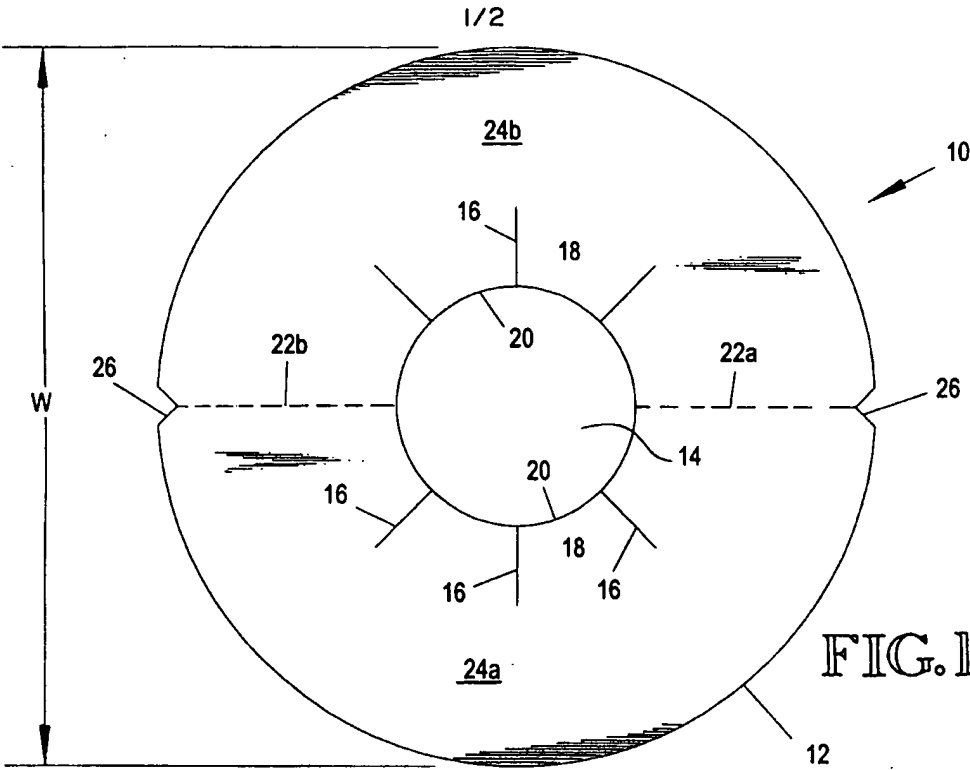
a flat disk-shaped body having an outer edge;

5 a central aperture having a diameter slightly less than that of the neck of a container onto which the coupon vehicle is installed;

a plurality of slits in the body extending radially from the central aperture, the slits cooperating with the central aperture to form flaps that flex when the coupon vehicle is installed on the neck of a container;

10 at least two lines of perforations extending from the outer edge to the central aperture and bisecting the coupon vehicle; and

a notch at each line of perforations where the line of perforations intersects the outer edge of the body.



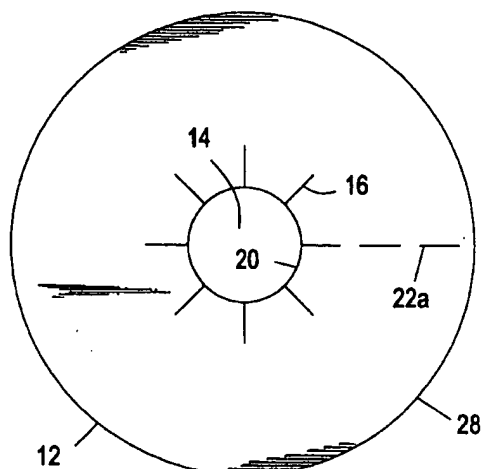


FIG. 3

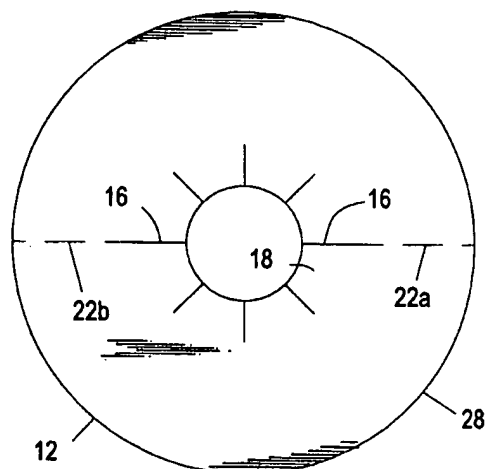


FIG. 4

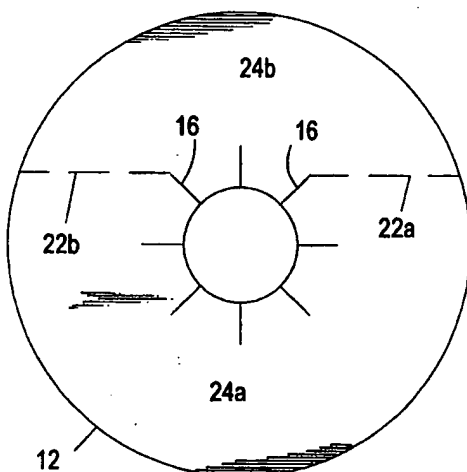


FIG. 5

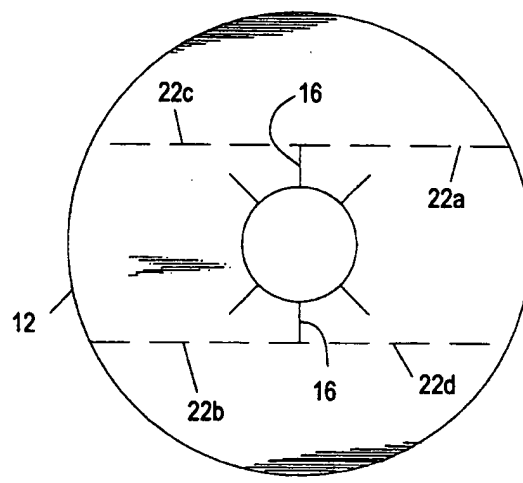


FIG. 6

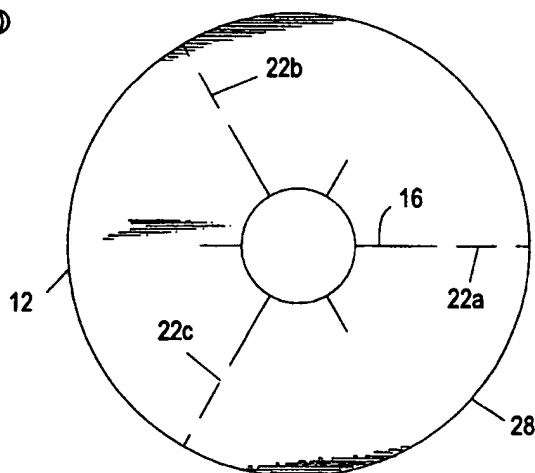


FIG. 7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Intern. Application No

PCT/US 99/29245

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 G09F3/04 G09F23/08 B65D23/14

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 G09F B65D

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5 826 356 A (LAPP JAMES F) 27 October 1998 (1998-10-27) cited in the application column 3, line 7 -column 4, line 37; figures	1-6,8-12
Y	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 1997, no. 03, 31 March 1997 (1997-03-31) & JP 08 301338 A (SANWA SHIGYO KK), 19 November 1996 (1996-11-19) abstract	1-6,8-12
A	US 2 007 685 A (G. LYLE) 9 July 1935 (1935-07-09)	
A	US 3 831 300 A (BERKHOUSE T) 27 August 1974 (1974-08-27)	

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

12 April 2000

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

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C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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A	US 5 555 655 A (YAGER JOHN ET AL) 17 September 1996 (1996-09-17)	
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Intern. Application No

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